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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 001210

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: DPP CHAIRPERSON TSAI ING-WEN ON TAIWAN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Classified By: AIT Director Stephen M. Young,
Reasons: 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: DPP Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen told the Director on August 12 that her recent statements criticizing the KMT's cross-Strait policies reflected the views of party supporters and were necessary to placate their "anger." Tsai said her current priority is getting the DPP house in order and she did not expect to be meeting with Chinese visitors at this stage. On the recent party congress, Tsai noted that the new Central Standing Committee is much younger than before. Also, amendments approved by the congress have strengthened the power and authority of party headquarters, especially to select candidates for the 2009 local elections. DPP International Affairs Director Lin Chen-wei, who accompanied Tsai, raised recent events in Georgia, wondering whether events there had some significance to America's commitment to Taiwan. The Director stressed that Taiwan and Georgia are quite different, and moreover the U.S. has a long-standing commitment to Taiwan under the Taiwan Relations Act. Tsai thought former President Chen's criminal investigation would play out slowly before any possible decision to indict him might be reached. Tsai informed the Director she will be visiting the U.S., including Washington DC, in September. End Summary

¶2. (C) On August 12, the Director discussed political developments with DPP Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen, who was accompanied by DPP International Affairs Director Lin Chen-wei. Tsai informed the Director she will be visiting the U.S. in September, delivering two speeches at Cornell University on Sept. 4 and 5, and then traveling to New York, Washington, Houston, and Los Angeles. Turning to the political situation in Taiwan, Tsai said DPP supporters are very unhappy about how the KMT government is dealing with cross-Strait issues. Her recent criticisms of the KMT's cross-Strait policy were what her supporters wanted to say, she explained, adding that her statements have served to calm their anger.

¶3. (C) Tsai said she will participate in a demonstration organized by the Taiwan Society near the Presidential Office on August 30, approximately 100 days after Ma's inauguration. She cannot ignore the demonstration, Tsai said, and any effort to stop it would backfire. However, the DPP will work to avoid confrontation and make the demonstration somewhat lighthearted. Tsai said she had told the organizers she did not want to see personal attacks. Demonstrators can express

their anger and unhappiness but should not attack the government.

14. (C) The Director told Tsai the U.S. is comfortable with cross-strait developments thus far under the KMT, but understands that her role as opposition leader is to criticize the government in a judicious way. Tsai responded that the people of course want her to criticize the government still more for incompetence and for selling out Taiwan. The majority of supporters are pleased with the way she has been speaking on their behalf, Tsai added.

15. (C) Tsai told the Director she had deflected a recent request for a meeting with a PRC visitor to Taiwan. Getting her own DPP house in order was her priority, not dialogue with China, Tsai noted. The Director asked whether Tsai would consider meeting with Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) Chairman Chen Yunlin when he visits Taiwan later this year. Tsai turned to Lin Chen-wei, who said the feasibility of a meeting would depend on what was said by the Chinese prior to Chen's visit, whether they would say his meetings would be without preconditions or would be on the basis of one China. Without going into details, Tsai said the DPP would have additional conditions for such a meeting, seeming to suggest that a meeting with Chen Yunlin would be difficult or impossible. Tsai also said the DPP is not at a point where there is a need to consider seriously any policy adjustments.

16. (C) The Director asked Tsai whether the KMT government's current problems may be emboldening the DPP old guard to take

TAIPEI 00001210 002 OF 002

a more active role in party affairs, complicating her reform efforts. Tsai responded that the "senior members" have been "okay," adding that she has seen them quite a few times in the past three months. Former Chairman Hsu Hsin-liang is rejoining the DPP, and former Chairman Lin I-hsiung is also very supportive. Tsai said she has visited former President Chen twice in his new office, and he has been supportive and "chatty." Tsai thought it would take a long time to reach any possible decision to prosecute Chen. Banning overseas travel by Chen would be controversial and "silly" politically, she added. It would be good if Chen travels and gets away from politics for a time, Tsai said, adding that Chen has not commented much on Ma Ying-jeou either publicly or privately since leaving office.

17. (C) Lin Chen-wei asked the Director whether there are parallels between Georgia and Taiwan and whether China would take lessons from the Russian experience with Georgia. The Director explained the background of the conflict between Russia and Georgia, and stressed that the situation of Taiwan is quite different than Georgia. Moreover, the U.S. has a long-standing commitment under the Taiwan Relations Act and a strong security relationship with Taiwan.

18. (C) Asked about the results of the DPP party congress on July 18, Tsai noted that the members of the new Central Standing Committee (CSC) are much younger than their predecessors. Most people who participate in party affairs are now in their 30s and 40s, she added. The DPP approved a number of amendments at the congress, the effect of which was to strengthen the power and authority of party headquarters, especially in the process for nominating candidates. Tsai added she did not enjoy having so much power. The DPP needs to make itself into a more credible party, Tsai stressed.

Comment

19. (C) Tsai Ing-wen, who brings a moderate and professional image to the DPP, is currently Taiwan's most popular politician, according to at least one poll. She appears to be doing a quite credible job so far in managing a party that has been known for factionalism and backbiting. Rallies,

marches, and demonstrations are one important part of the DPP's traditional culture. One key to the DPP's making a strong comeback will for the rather low-key Tsai to demonstrate an ability to stir large and impassioned crowds of supporters.

YOUNG